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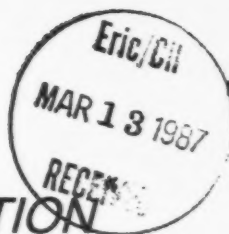
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ABSTRACT

While Esperanto is not yet officially accepted as a second language for all people, it has long been a fully functional language. The promotion of Esperanto, organized mainly by the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA), is intimately associated with the search for peace and international cooperation. The organization has provided relief work in wartime through exchange of private correspondence between warring countries and use of Esperanto to inform the world about the war. Its educational activities include books, periodicals, seminars, intercultural children's projects, and consultation and translation for UNESCO. Annual world congresses on such topics as intercultural communication and human rights and individual idea exchanges are also important ongoing UEA activities. The UEA continues to build the bases for peace among individuals. (MSE)

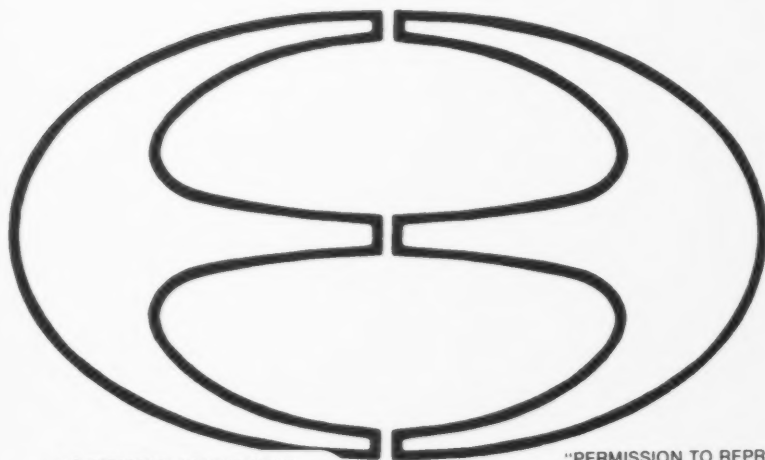
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THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNIVERSAL ESPERANTO ASSOCIATION TO WORLD PEACE



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**THE CONTRIBUTION OF
THE UNIVERSAL ESPERANTO ASSOCIATION
TO WORLD PEACE**

Ulrich Lins

**1. THE ATTITUDE OF THE ESPERANTO MOVEMENT
TO PROBLEMS OF PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING**

According to the Constitution of the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA), the Association has two aims: first, "to promote the use of the International Language Esperanto," and, second, "to facilitate all relations, spiritual and material, among people, without distinction as to nationality, race, religion, politics, or languages." The activities and achievements associated with the first of these two goals — in a more restricted sense recruitment for Esperanto — is for the most part outside the scope of the present survey. Instead, we shall be concerned with one specific aspect of UEA's activities related to the second goal, namely the contribution of the Esperanto movement to the furtherance of world peace and the bringing together of the peoples of the world.

We hope to show, first, that though the International Language Esperanto is not yet officially accepted as a second language for all people, it has for a long time been a fully functional language capable of practical results precisely in the area of world peace, so important in the world today; and, secondly, that the very work for the promotion of Esperanto, organized mainly by UEA, is inextric-

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ably bound up, by its very nature, with the search for peace and international cooperation.

The idea of peace among states and understanding among people has accompanied Esperanto from its very beginnings. When the Jewish oculist Lazarus Ludovic Zamenhof (1859-1917) published the first textbook in his "lingvo internacia" in Warsaw in 1887, he regarded it as an attempt to realize the dream of his youth. In Bialystok, his birthplace, there lived Jews, Poles, Russians and Germans. Their burning hatred for one another was a source of great torment to his young mind. "In such a town, more than anywhere else," Zamenhof later recalled, "an impressionable nature feels the crushing sadness of language differences and is convinced at every turn that the diversity of languages is the sole, or at least the chief, cause of the disunion of the human family, splitting it into hostile camps." For this reason, wrote Zamenhof, he decided that "when I am grown up, I will definitely do away with this evil."

To the conviction that Esperanto could serve in the abolition of the evil of language diversity and so contribute to the brotherhood of all humankind, the language owed its rapid and marked popularity, first among Russians, then among the French and Germans, and gradually in other parts of the world too. The idealistic drive of Zamenhof, coupled with the expressiveness of the language itself, served to raise the language in a surprisingly short time to a level that no other project for an artificial language ever achieved, namely to the rank of a genuinely living language.

The powerful emotional appeal contained in the belief in the fraternizing mission of Esperanto caused its initial adepts to devote little attention to the essentially utopian elements in Zamenhof's thinking. Such considerations for long remained subordinate to the simple fact that Esperanto satisfied the need for communication among a growing community of speakers, and that from the beginning it proved useful for practical purposes, regardless of the remoteness of the goals of the brotherhood of all people. In an age when feelings about international solidarity were still rudimentary, when competition between imperialistic powers was the order of the day and when only modest steps had been taken to work out the rules of arbitration in the solution of international disputes, it was not at all surprising that the supporters of Esperanto were inclined

to overestimate the peacemaking role of their language, seeing it as an expression of the longing of mankind for unity.

Notwithstanding what outside observers regarded as too much attention to the linguistic roots of international discord, the speakers of Esperanto nevertheless understood that having people live in peace with one another required more than simply overcoming language differences. Zamenhof himself understood that a supra-national language was not enough to bring the peoples of the world together. In his youth he was active in the Zionist movement, but later he resolved to go on to solve the problem of racial discrimination (which was what drove him to his activity) in a wider field. He devoted much of his energy to the development of a "neutral human religion," which would transcend all racial and religious barriers, calling on all people to recognize themselves first and foremost as individuals in the world of humanity and only secondarily members of some nation or religion. Even before Zamenhof, in his *Deklaracio pri Homaranismo* [1913], gave definitive form to his guiding principles — the condemnation of national arrogance and pious hypocrisy and a plea for obedience to a basic, universally valid set of ethical rules — the first Russian speakers of Esperanto were eagerly contributing to the dissemination of the ideas of Leo Tolstoy, whose plea for a religion-based reform of society and non-violent resistance to the Tsarist regime they found completely in accord with Zamenhof's efforts for the brotherhood of humankind. On the other hand, the extreme idealism of the pioneers of Esperanto in autocratic Russia was not wholly acceptable to people in western Europe. As Esperanto gained ground there, the leadership of the Esperanto movement was taken up by French intellectuals, who expected that Esperanto would demonstrate its practical use in international relations in an era of capitalism. Although the majority of them leaned towards pacifism, the special rhetoric of brotherhood used by Russian Esperantists in the context of the interethnic strife of their country was alien to the French. They regarded the syncretistic ideas of Zamenhof particularly harmful to the further expansion of Esperanto in the developed and sophisticated west. Under the influence of its French leaders, the first conference of Esperanto-speakers at Boulogne-sur-Mer [1905] approved a Declaration which defined an Esperantist as anyone "who

knows and uses the Esperanto language regardless of his reason for so doing" and declared the official movement not responsible for any "idea or aspiration" entertained by any individual in connection with Esperanto.

Although in theory this Declaration sanctioned the use of Esperanto for any purpose whatever, even for purposes anything but "peacemaking", the great majority of Esperanto speakers always held Esperanto to be more than a mere language, believing, on the contrary, that at the same time it symbolized the natural aspirations of humanity for peace. This belief in an "internal idea" in Esperanto was kept alive principally by Zamenhof, who refused to limit the application of the language to purely commercial ends. "Everything," he stated during his inaugural address to the Esperanto congress in Cambridge [1907], "that, giving offence to none, can create a peaceful bridge between the peoples, is not only not something to be timidly avoided, but on the contrary should be the very essence of our meetings..."

As early as the first decade of the new century a sizable pacifist literature already existed in Esperanto. This literature analyzed the economic and social roots of world conflict and called for the guaranteeing of peace through institutional means. The journal *Espero Pacifista* (Pacifist Hope) began publication in 1905. Well-known pacifists were among the first authors of Esperanto textbooks for their compatriots, for example the Slovak Albert Skarvan and the Austrian Alfred Hermann Fried, who won the Nobel Prize in 1911, or they played important roles in their national Esperanto movements, for example Felix Moscheles, of Britain, or Georg Arnhold, of Germany. Among the first adepts of Esperanto in France was Gaston Moch, who was active in the Dreyfus-sympathising League for Human Rights and who resigned from the army to devote himself to the battle for peace and democracy.

There nonetheless remained a conflict between the concept of a language serving all purposes (as defined in the Declaration of Boulogne) and Zamenhof's insistence that Esperanto was needed above all "to nurture the flame of human devotion and hope". A successful effort, if not to dissolve, at least to alleviate this contradiction was the establishment, in 1908, of the Universal Esperanto Association. Founded by the young Swiss Hector Hodler,

UEA has remained the major representative organization of the Esperanto movement, on the one hand facilitating, through the setting up of a worldwide network of local representatives, the use of the language for the most varied purposes, and, on the other, adopting in more realistic form the original idealism of Zamenhof. The new association defined Esperanto as "practical internationalism" aiming not only to facilitate the relations between *nations* but also to be the vanguard in a new, positive phase of internationalism. As Hodler emphasized, it is impossible to consider the problem of world language apart from other social problems. To him, Esperanto was "principally a social, constructive and progressive movement" trying to bring *people* together regardless of national, linguistic or racial differences. Hodler saw the fate of Esperanto as "intimately bound up with the triumph of the movement for the establishment of a peaceful international order" and accordingly he demanded of members of UEA an active struggle against "international anarchy".

By turning away from an earlier tendency to utopianism, the founding of UEA brought the Esperanto movement to a deeper understanding of the complexity of the roots of international strife and the political means necessary to work against it. Already during the First World War pioneering articles began to appear in the Association's journal calling for new legal controls in inter-state relations. The main principles of postwar reconstruction were defined in these articles as "national freedom, democratic government, an international league of states". In addition to this, Hodler pointed out perceptively that "this League of Nations will be viable only if it unites not simply governments by legal instruments but also, and more importantly, the peoples themselves in a spirit of mutual understanding". Likewise Zamenhof, in his last years, came to a more realistic understanding of the attainability of his lofty ideals, concentrating on immediate and urgent tasks. In a memorandum to the Congress of Races in London in 1913 he stressed the need for inter-racial tolerance as a prerequisite for the prevention of international conflict; and in his "Appeal to the Diplomats" [1915] he not only argued for complete national sovereignty and the guarantee of full democratic rights to the citizens of the countries concerned, but also proposed the establishment of a European Court to regulate con-

flicts. In the more distant future Zamenhof foresaw the creation of a United States of Europe.

After the foundation of the League of Nations, the journal of UEA carried many articles in support of the League's aims and activities. These appeals came mainly from the pen of Edmond Privat, editor of the journal and from 1924 to 1928 president of the Association. Privat also produced a number of books in Esperanto on similar topics, for example *Interpopola Konduto* (Conduct Among Peoples; 1935). A friend of Mahatma Gandhi and Romain Rolland, Privat enjoyed a high reputation outside the Esperanto movement as a campaigner for the independence of Poland and India. For its part, the League of Nations also recognized the potential of the Esperanto movement. Its deputy secretary-general Inazo Nitobe called Esperanto "a driving force for international democracy" and an official League of Nations report on *Esperanto as an International Auxiliary Language* [1922] concluded (p. 23):

Language is a great force, and the League of Nations has every reason to watch with particular interest the progress of the Esperanto movement, which, should it become more widespread, may one day lead to great results from the point of view of the moral unity of the world.

Such expectations were nourished by the fact that in the 1920's tens of thousands of people were learning Esperanto. The language not only allowed these people to exchange ideas directly with people from other countries, but was also linked with hopes for a more just society, such as were particularly evident among working people. In 1921 a special organization was founded, called «*Sen-nacieca Asocio Tutmonda*» (Nationless Association Worldwide), devoted to the international education of the proletariat by means of Esperanto. Its weekly newspaper *Sennaciulo* (Person Without a Nation), in which ordinary people from all parts of the world gave straightforward accounts of their living conditions and personal cares and pleasures, had an important multiplier effect, because hundreds of national-language magazines drew on its contents. Conferences, an abundant literature, the teaching of Esperanto in schools in several countries, mass courses for workers — all this testified to the great popularity of the language, along with the inter-

nationalist tendencies expressed through it, in the Twenties and early Thirties.

With the advance of Fascism the Esperanto movement suffered terrible blows. In 1936 Hitler's Germany prohibited further promotion of the language, which the Nazis regarded as "a language of communists" and also linked with "Jewish illusions about the brotherhood of man". Only a year or two later the Esperanto Union in the Soviet Union was broken up as an "international espionage organization". As a result, the lively international correspondence through which Soviet speakers of Esperanto maintained contact with the rest of the world was forcibly halted. In these persecutions thousands of Esperanto speakers perished. Also members of the Zamenhof family fell victim to the Nazi terror in Poland.

After the Second World War, during which Esperanto activity was almost at a standstill, UEA was reconstituted as an association made up of the majority of the national Esperanto associations and of individuals joining it directly. UEA was one of the first international organizations to proclaim itself in accord with the aims of the United Nations. As early as the middle of 1947, about a year and a half before the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [December 10, 1948], the Association added to its Constitution a paragraph stating that "respect for human rights" was "an essential condition" for its work. In this way UEA made it clearer than ever before that its neutrality as regards politics, race and religion stopped at that point where fundamental human rights were ignored or where the development of peace and international cooperation was directly threatened.

It follows that in its activities in the outside world UEA, which as of 1954 has had consultative relations with Unesco, insistently and systematically supports all efforts tending to strengthen the observance of human rights and the improvement of relations among nations. To such activities belong, for example, the major campaigns organized by UEA — again in line with initiatives of the United Nations — for example in Human Rights Year [1968], in International Cooperation Year [1965] and on the occasion of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. Through its participation in these campaigns aimed at the creation of a more peaceful and united world, UEA has demonstrated its identification

with the United Nations Charter and, more recently, with the Declaration of Helsinki. At the same time, the specific concerns of UEA always remain essential in these activities: through its fight against linguistic discrimination (one form of violation of fundamental human rights) and through its plea for the facilitation of communication among all people as an essential precondition for genuine peace and understanding, the Association seeks to turn public opinion towards a set of problems which have remained neglected in intergovernmental conferences and which up to now have not received the attention they deserve from the general public. The essential point, in the words of Ivo Lapenna, for many years president of UEA, is this:

Little has been done, or is being done, for understanding on the simplest but most important level of all, the level of ordinary people... Attention is always directed at the coexistence of states and much less, if at all, at the friendly, peaceful coexistence of ordinary individuals.

To inform the outside world of its laggardliness in solving this aspect of international cooperation, and to continue unremittingly the Association's own contribution in this field — these are the chief tasks of UEA in the future.

2. PRACTICAL WORK THROUGH ESPERANTO FOR PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING: A FEW EXAMPLES

2.1 Relief Work in Time of War

When the First World War broke out, the Universal Esperanto Association at once offered its services to the general public in helping those marooned in foreign countries by the outbreak of hostilities. UEA's headquarters in Geneva announced its readiness to mediate the exchange of private correspondence between the warring countries. It collected the mail received through its network of local representatives, sorted it by country and classification and forwarded it, again through its local representatives, to the addressees. The requests dealt with in this manner ultimately reached an average of four hundred a day. In addition to acting as an agent for correspondence, UEA also helped to trace individuals, dispatched food, clothing and medicine, repatriated children and helped prisoners of war. The number of individual services rendered by UEA local representatives and a dozen volunteers in the Association's headquarters ran to more than 100 000 in one year.

During the Second World War the international Esperanto organizations set up similar services. As early as 1936 "Esperantist Inter-aid" was established to aid victims of the Nazi terror, mainly Jewish speakers of Esperanto, to escape from Germany and Nazi-occupied territory. During this war the forwarding of mail and food to internees from neutral Switzerland could operate on a limited scale only, because the network of local representatives could not be used to the same extent as in the First World War. Still, it was possible to help, among others, Spanish exiles and Jewish refugees in France and members of the Zamenhof family in Poland, before the Nazi policy of extermination annihilated them too. After the war, the Esperanto organizations did good work in reuniting scattered families.

Also worthy of note was the use of Esperanto to inform the world about the horrors of the war: speakers of Esperanto in Japan translated the first detailed reports of the sufferings of the atom bomb

victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Retranslated from Esperanto into many national languages, these shattering descriptions reached a vast reading public in Europe.

2.2 Educational Activities

Several national Unesco Commissions are currently cooperating closely to revise nationally used textbooks to remove stereotypes and misrepresentations of foreign countries and peoples. On this subject, which is so important for the cultivation of international awareness among children, speakers and users of Esperanto were among the first in the field. In the 1920's, a group of teachers in France initiated the compilation of a book whose purpose was to remove chauvinistic tendencies from history teaching. The material for the book was collected through Esperanto in fifteen countries. Equally notable was the conference "Peace Through School", which convened in Prague over Easter 1927 at the invitation of the International Office of Education in Geneva. At the end of the conference, in which Esperanto was used as the only language of interpretation, the almost 500 delegates from 19 countries approved recommendations on the international exchange of school children and the removal of chauvinism from textbooks.

In 1957 an International Pedagogical Seminar was held in Yugoslavia on the subject "Esperanto and School". The conference analyzed the presentation of history in the textbooks of various countries. In their conclusions, the participants pleaded, among other things, for a wider and more objective consideration of non-European history in European textbooks and suggested that Unesco publish readers with model texts for international use alongside national textbooks.

In 1955 there appeared a 15-volume work *Children of the World*, published by a Japanese firm, in which children of many lands described themselves and their lives to Japanese children. A large part of the contributions by children, principally for the volumes on France, Germany, Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Southern Europe, were collected through cooperation between the Japanese editors and speakers of Esperanto in the various countries. A unique initiative came in 1956 from a Swiss teacher: he proposed to link children's Esperanto classes through a worldwide interschool

magazine in Esperanto with texts and drawings by the children themselves, varying in age from six to fifteen. The idea was well received, and by 1969 thirty-six classes in sixteen countries, calling themselves "Seeds in the Wind" (Grajnoj en Vento), were working together to produce their contributions three times a year. In this way, from an early age, the teaching of Esperanto stimulates a mental transformation from regional or national exclusiveness to global breadth, and helps schoolchildren to understand 'foreignness' and to practice toleration.

It seems hardly necessary to point out the educational function performed by the Esperanto-language periodicals published in virtually all parts of the world. They regularly include articles whose aim is to strengthen the awareness of readers that it is everyone's responsibility to help solve world problems — through disarmament, the battle against hunger, the guaranteeing of human rights, the removal of racism and of all forms of cultural discrimination. The Esperanto press also argues that in the work of international organizations and in negotiations among states huge sums are squandered on interpretation and translation — sums that might be better spent for other purposes, if organizations and governments could be convinced of the value of Esperanto as an effective and inexpensive solution to the language problem.

For over thirty years UEA has worked with Unesco, with which it has Consultative Relations. It has published an Esperanto translation of the Unesco publication *East and West – Towards Mutual Understanding*, and Unesco in its turn has published an Esperanto version of its Recommendation on Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education Concerning Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The prestigious "East-West Series" of Esperanto translations of representative literary masterpieces from both hemispheres is published under UEA's auspices and includes, among others, *The Divine Comedy*, *Kalevala*, *The Quran*, *Martin Fierro* and works by Shakespeare, Baudelaire, Tagore and Kawabata.

2.3 World Congresses

The chief manifestations of the Esperanto movement are the World Congresses of Esperanto organized yearly by UEA. These conferences are arranged not only to discuss the internal affairs of the Association but also to provide an average of 2 000 participants from all parts of the world a broad and varied programme — from academic lectures and discussion groups to theatrical productions and public-speaking competitions. The only language of the Congress is Esperanto — and hence there is no place for that feeling of inferiority, so frequent among participants in international meetings whose native languages are not among the working languages of the conference concerned, in which a delegate is psychologically hindered from intervening in debates on the same level as speakers whose national languages are 'official'.

Usually the World Congresses focus on one major topic, for example: The Right to Communicate [Reykjavik, 1977]; Understanding, Peace, Development [Beijing, 1986]; Esperanto as an Instrument for an International Conception of the World [Vienna, 1970]; World Tourism and Linguistic Diversity [Portland, 1972]; Nationalism and International Cooperation in Today's World [Hamburg, 1974], and so on. Out of these discussions have arisen resolutions calling on governments to accept all the conventions having to do with human rights and to ratify all the relevant pacts, or resolutions such as that pointing out that "any methods employed in education for international understanding must remain useless or yield minimal results if the barrier of language is not overcome, since this constitutes a fundamental obstacle to the interpersonal communication of the great mass of ordinary people". One sign that the contribution of the Congresses to education in an internationalist spirit is receiving greater recognition is the fact that the number of governments officially represented in the opening ceremony each year is growing steadily.

2.4 Personal Contacts

Not only the Congresses, but also numerous national and regional meetings provide opportunities for speakers of Esperanto to meet one another and exchange ideas. The youth section of UEA organizes regular seminars and holiday weeks for young people; it also runs a service for the exchange of visits to families in various countries. By and large, since the war the spoken use of Esperanto has grown considerably. Increased facilities for tourism have enhanced the value of the language as a practical means of communication among people from many countries and every social level, and Esperanto speakers enjoy a privileged position compared with the average tourist. Books in national languages describing journeys abroad using Esperanto and documenting the learning process set in motion by such travel find a ready sale in, for example, Japan.

The many personal contacts made possible by a knowledge of Esperanto form a firm foundation for the Esperanto movement. They remain for the speakers of the language an experience as inspiring as that undergone by the participants in the First Congress of Esperanto in 1905 in Boulogne-sur-Mer, where, in the words of Zamenhof, the congress united "not French with English, not Russians with Poles, but people with people". The form and content of these contacts of course varies a great deal; it is hard to measure their extent or analyze their full effect. Furthermore, they are not only direct meetings in which Esperanto is spoken. For many, the use of the language occurs primarily in the form of correspondence. The significance of such exchanges of opinion across national boundaries through letters written in Esperanto can hardly be over-emphasized. Only someone familiar with the life of Esperanto speakers can gain an adequate impression of how much value lies in such international correspondence, in this most intimate form of the practical application of Esperanto, and what an educational function — in the sense that it leads to better understanding of the diversity and value of cultures — it can play.

Beyond official channels and prescribed forms of communication, beyond abstract statements on peace and international friendship and edifying resolutions on the contribution of Esperanto to world solidarity, it is at this level of personal contacts that we discover the true shape of what one might call the internationalism-in-practice of the Esperantists.

3. CONCLUSION

The preamble to the Unesco Constitution emphasizes that war starts in the minds of men and that it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be built. The Universal Esperanto Association, not only in the formally proclaimed principles of its constitution but also in all aspects of its actual activities, does exactly this: it builds the basis of peace in the minds of ordinary people. Unesco recognized this in its Resolution of December 10, 1954, by acknowledging "the results attained by Esperanto in the field of international intellectual relations and the rapprochement of the peoples of the world". In 1985, the 23rd session of the Unesco General Conference reminded its members of the progress achieved in the meantime and expressed recognition of the "great possibilities that Esperanto offers for international understanding and communication among peoples of different countries."

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ULRICH LINS studied history, political science and Japanese studies at the Universities of Cologne and Tokyo. From 1978 to 1983 he was representative of the German Academic Exchange Service in Tokyo, and he is now department head in its headquarters in Bonn. Dr. Lins has written books and articles on pre-war militarism in Japan, German-Japanese relations, university politics, international cultural exchange and the history of Esperanto. The first edition of the present document appeared in this series in 1975.

Publication list of Esperanto Documents

No. Title

1. Unesco and the UEA (out of print)
2. Universal Esperanto Association, Annual Report 1974-75 (out of print)
3. The 60th Universal Congress of Esperanto
4. The development of poetic language in Esperanto
5. The contribution of the Universal Esperanto Association to world peace (out of print)
6. An introduction to Esperanto studies (out of print)
7. Esperanto on the air
8. The Universal Esperanto Association in International Women's Year 1975
9. International travel by speakers of Esperanto
10. Universal Esperanto Association, Annual Report 1975-76
11. Language problems and the Final Act (out of print)
12. Esperanto and the Universal Esperanto Association (out of print)
13. Language and the right to communicate (out of print)
14. Esperanto and older people
15. Language and international communication: The right to communicate (out of print)
16. The use of the international language Esperanto as a partial solution to language problems in international nongovernmental organizations: some recommendations
17. Understanding among Africans: linguistic isolations and linguistic communication
18. The future of modern languages in English-speaking countries
19. The cultural value of Esperanto
20. Translation in International Organizations
21. Language equality in international cooperation (out of print)
22. Esperanto: European or Asiatic language?
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27. Esperanto in the service of the United Nations
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29. Esperanto and literary translation
30. Esperanto and the International Year of Disabled Persons 1981
31. The educational value of Esperanto study: an American view
32. Unesco and the UEA 1976-1982
33. World Communications Year: Social and linguistic aspects of modern communication
34. The language problem in tourism
35. A history of the World Esperanto Youth Organization
36. A lingua franca for Africa
37. The contribution of the Universal Esperanto Association to world peace
38. The language problem in science and the role of the international language Esperanto

Several of the above documents are also available in French or Esperanto.